

BUSH FIRE RESPONSE PROCEDURE

The Education and Care National Law and National Regulations requires that early childhood education and care services ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from foreseeable risk of harm, injury and infection, including responding to potential bush fire risks. (National Quality Standard 2.2.2). Medowie Gumnut Preschool is responsible for the preparedness and safety of children and employees in relation to bushfires and reducing children's exposure to smoke. As bushfire smoke can affect children's health and safety, it is critically important to implement procedures to reduce smoke exposure.

Working in conjunction with the Bush Fire Policy, this procedure provides detailed steps for educators to follow in the event of a bush fire emergency close to the service and assists the Service to manage the challenges from bushfires and reducing the risk of smoke inhalation.

Education and Care Services National Law or Regulations (R.12, 51, 89, 93, 97, 98 and 168) NQS QA 2: Children's Health and Safety Element 2.1.2 2.2.2 NQS QA 7: Governance and Leadership. Element 7.1.2

BUSH FIRES IN VICTORIA

Early Childhood Services that are assessed to be at a high level of fire risk are placed on the department's Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR). These services need to have pre-emptive closure plans created for when the Bureau of Meteorology forecasts the days weather to be a Catastrophic fire danger rating (FDR) in their district. Services facilities with a lower fire risk are listed on the department's [Category 4 list](#).

SMOKE FROM FIRES

If the day is visibly smoky, educators will set up indoor activities and experiences for children. If the air conditioner is in use, ensure it is not drawing in air from outside.

The daily air quality during the fire season in NSW will be displayed on the parent notice board for viewing. Bushfire smoke contains fine particles of debris and gases known to cause health effects. Symptoms may include:

- itchy/burning eyes
- runny nose
- shortness of breath
- cough
- throat irritation and
- may trigger a more severe response such as an asthma attack.

NSW Government: <https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/air-quality/current-air-quality>

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY DIAL 000

Step 1: PREPARATION PRIOR TO BUSH FIRE

The approved provider/nominated supervisor will:

1	Review and update the Service's Bushfire Policy and Emergency Management Plan (EMP) each year in consultation with Emergency Services, families, educators and children to ensure appropriate response strategies are in place in the event of a Bushfire emergency
2	Conduct a risk assessment to identify potential harm or hazards due to poor air quality and potential danger of fire to Service. The risk assessment is to be reviewed at least every 12 months and following any incident or circumstance that may affect the safe evacuation of children
3	Check the Fire Danger Rating (FDR) daily during bushfire season Check Fires Near Me app (NSW Rural Fire Service)
4	Ensure fire-fighting equipment (hoses etc.) are prepared and maintained as per routine schedule
5	Communicate with staff and families about specific information and arrangements to reduce the danger of smoke exposure and inhalation and ensure children's medical management plans/Asthma Action Plans are current and medication is in date
6	Check the contents of First Aid Kits for emergency asthma equipment- (Ventolin inhaler)
7	Ensure all staff maintain awareness of emergency asthma management strategies; have read, acknowledged and have access to individual children's medical management plans and medication
8	Ensure an educator or staff member with current ACECQA approved first aid- including life support and CPR training; emergency asthma management and anaphylaxis management training is in attendance at the service premises at all times children are provided education and care
9	Ensure families provide the Service with reliable emergency contact numbers upon enrolment
10	Ensure the Service mobile phone is fully charged and easily accessible
11	Ensure children's medication is easily accessible and available to obtain in an emergency
12	Remove any fire hazards from the Service and ensure emergency exits are always free from objects and obstruction

Step 2: DURING A BUSH FIRE EMERGENCY

The approved provider/nominated supervisor will:

1	Follow the Service's <i>Emergency Management Plan</i> and any instructions as provided by emergency services	
2	Monitor fire ratings through relevant authorities on a daily or hourly basis- Fires Near Me app (NSW Rural Fire Service); for information about fires within the area.	
3	Contact buses, transport suppliers for potential use during bush fire emergency in case of emergency evacuation	
4	Inform families when the Fire Danger Rating is SEVERE, Extreme or Catastrophic by sending an email/alert on Service app/communication letter and posting a notice on the family communication board	
5	Monitor air quality and follow health messages by accessing the following website: https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/air-quality/current-air-quality Move children to indoor environment if conditions deteriorate, the lockdown procedure is to be implemented if required	

Staff, educators and educator assistants will:

1	Keep informed of current up to date emergency information through the internet, local emergency services or radio and/or app- Fires Near Me (NSW)	
2	Identify children who have diagnosed asthma If a child with asthma shows signs of breathing difficulty (wheeze, persistent cough) educators will follow their medical management plan/Asthma Action Plan and contact parents and monitor them closely. IF SYMPTOMS PERSIST, OR WORSEN, CALL AN AMBULANCE ON 000 IMMEDIATELY	
3	Bring pets inside	
4	Close all windows and doors and turn off air conditioners	
5	Place towels underneath doorways to prevent smoke entering the Service	

Step 3: DURING AN EMERGENCY EVACUATION

The approved provider/nominated supervisor will:

1	Confirm the severity of the bush fire by contacting emergency services and evaluate the possible threat impacting the Service	
2	Discuss the situation with all staff and educators and activate the emergency evacuation procedure whilst outlining staff and educator's evacuation duties	

3	Contact families of the Service and advise them of the emergency evacuation and closure effective immediately via email/text/phone and if already evacuating, notify them to collect their child at the safe assembly area designated	
4	Ensure all children, staff, educators and visitors are accounted for prior to departure and on arrival to the safe location/ assembly area/evacuation centre	
5	If a parent/guardian is unable to pick up their child, notify the child's emergency contact person to collect. If no contacts are able to collect an educator will stay with children at the Service or in the assembly area if evacuated	
6	Use a record of attendance, staff sign in and visitor register to ensure all children, staff, educators and visitors are accounted for	
7	Maintain contact with Emergency Services and inform them of evacuation and confirm again with Emergency Services when completely evacuated the Service, providing them with the number of persons evacuated	
8	Notify the Regulatory Authority within 24 hours of the incident and service closure via NQA ITS	
Staff, educators and educator assistants will:		
1	Ensure medications and emergency evacuation bags are collected during the emergency evacuation	
2	Ensure if parents/guardians or emergency contacts are unable to collect children from the Service an educator will stay with children at the Service or in the assembly area/evacuation centre if evacuated	
3	Move all children to the assembly area for evacuation	
4	Ensure if the fire prevents anyone from leaving the Service, educators will stay with the children and remain calm until the situation has been assessed and advised by emergency services	
5	Ensure no person re-enters the evacuated building or area until advised by emergency services	

REVIEW OF PROCEDURE			
Date procedure created	18/2/2025	To be reviewed	Feb 2026
Approved by	Sharon Hales	Signature	SH
Procedure Reviewed Date	Modifications/Changes		
February 2024	Procedure combined with Bush Fire Smoke Procedure		
March 2022	Procedure reviewed: Additional information regarding review of policy added		